

Jefferson Memorial

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Official National Park Handbook

Jefferson Memorial

An Essay by Merrill D. Peterson

**Interpretive Guide to
Thomas Jefferson Memorial
District of Columbia**

**Produced by the
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**U.S. Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C.**

About This Book

The Thomas Jefferson Memorial is located appropriately on one of the most prominent sites in the Nation's Capital, the Tidal Basin in West Potomac Park south of the White House. Thousands of people from across the United States and around the world annually visit this shrine to the writer of the Declaration of Independence and third U.S. President. In Part 1 of this handbook, historian Merrill D. Peterson introduces the reader to the man and the memorial. In his Part 2 interpretive biography, Peterson assesses Jefferson's achievements and his legacy. Pictorial essays in Parts 1 and 2 present vignettes of the memorial and Jefferson's life.

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Part 1



Shrine to Democracy





SLAVES SWORN UPON THE

WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS TO BE SELF EVIDENT THAT ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL THAT THEY ARE ENDOWED WITH CERTAIN UNALIENABLE RIGHTS AMONG THESE ARE LIFE LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS THAT TO SECURE THESE RIGHTS GOVERNMENTS ARE INSTITUTED AMONG MEN WE ARE INSTANTLY PLACED AND DISOBEY THAT THESE COLONIES ARE AND OF RIGHT SHOULD BE FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES AND FOR THE SUPPORT OF THIS DECLARATION WITH A FIRM RELIANCE ON THE PROTECTION OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE WE MUTUALLY PLEDGE OUR LIVES OUR FORTUNES AND OUR SACRED HONORS

An Evolving Symbol

The 19-foot bronze statue of Thomas Jefferson stands on a pedestal of black Minnesota granite below the memorial's dome. Sculptor Rudolph Evans based the fur-trimmed coat on Thomas Sully's full-length painting of Jefferson.

Preceding pages: John Russell Pope designed the memorial so that the statue can be seen from all the cardinal points.

Cover: Japanese cherry trees, the focus of Washington's Cherry Blossom Festival every April, border the Tidal Basin and frame Jefferson Memorial.

On April 13, 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt dedicated a brilliant memorial to Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence and third President of the United States, in the Nation's Capital before 5,000 spectators and a radio audience of millions.

"Today, in the midst of a great war for freedom, we dedicate a shrine to freedom," the President intoned. The state of freedom was gray and gusty like the weather on this 200th anniversary of Jefferson's birth. With the majesty of the Washington Monument at his back, the President faced the multitude and the gleaming white marble pantheon that encircled the statue of Jefferson. Americans of this generation, he continued, understood what earlier generations could not understand so well, "that men who will not fight for liberty can lose it." So, in the ordeal of world war, Roosevelt dedicated the memorial to the oldest and surest conception of Jefferson, Apostle of Liberty.

Roosevelt knew, however, that Jefferson had come to stand for something more, for ideas of beauty, science, and learning, for a way of life enriched by the heritage of the ages yet distinctly American in outline. And so he saluted him, finally, as a hero of culture as well as of liberty, as the multifaceted genius and planner for the future, a man who "led the steps of America into the path of the permanent integrity of the republic."

The Jefferson Memorial completed the plans for a central, monumental core first proposed by Pierre L'Enfant and elaborated on by the McMillan Commission in 1902. Three of the cardinal points were fixed by noble monuments to the nation's great: George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Thomas Jefferson. The White House and Capitol anchored the other two positions.

Americans revered Washington, they loved Lincoln, and they quoted—often on opposite sides of



Rembrandt Peale painted this portrait of Thomas Jefferson in early 1800 when Jefferson was finishing his term as vice president under John Adams. In the Presidential election later that year, Jefferson and Aaron Burr received the same number of votes. The House of Representatives, controlled by the Federalist party, ultimately decided Jefferson was the lesser evil and elected him President. The 12th amendment, ratified four years later, has prevented this situation from ever recurring.

the same question—and argued about Jefferson. That he should be the last of these immortals to be honored, 117 years after his death, was not surprising. His image in the American mind was one of shifts and shadows, and the track of his reputation proved as serpentine as one of his garden walls at the University of Virginia.

As Jefferson was politically embattled in life, so was he embattled after his death. He became a symbol of what American democracy ought to be. Generation after generation invoked his name, his doctrines, his ideals for one cause or another. As American democracy evolved, so did Jefferson's image in the American mind. The course of the nation's history was punctuated by hearings, negotiations, trials, appeals without number on the meaning, significance, and purpose of Thomas Jefferson. Through the fog of rhetoric generated by the symbol, it has been difficult to discern the historic personage or to comprehend the many facets of his genius.

The struggle between Jefferson and his great rival, Alexander Hamilton, became the epic conflict of American politics. As in philosophy all men were Platonists or Aristotelians, it was said, so in American politics all men were disciples of Jefferson or Hamilton. History was written from these divergent perspectives. Jefferson and Hamilton were, as historian David Muzzey said, "like two buckets in a well, alternately elevated or depressed as an historian of the Federalist or the Republican school manipulates the chain."

Jefferson's ascendancy lasted until the Civil War. Many who fought to preserve the Union, however, blamed secession and bloodshed on Jefferson's ideas of individualism, states rights, and strict construction, and hailed the triumph of Union arms as a vindication of Hamilton and his vision of a strong and supreme national government. Jefferson's reputation went into eclipse.

It revived in the 20th century, first because of a more liberal and progressive appreciation of his political legacy, and second because a new image of Jefferson as the quintessential "Renaissance Man" took form.

In an age when aggression against the individual was as likely to come from the social and economic order as from the political, when ills of poverty, dis-

ease, discrimination, and despair mocked old notions of negative government, it became necessary to rethink and revise the traditional Jeffersonian creed to ensure that it served the enduring ends of freedom, democracy, and opportunity rather than its time-worn means. In due course the historic Jefferson-Hamilton dialogue disappeared from American politics to be replaced by a new formula that employed Hamiltonian means for Jeffersonian ends.

Jefferson the many-sided genius, although glimpsed by his contemporaries, was largely forgotten after his death. Slowly, over the past century, Americans have come to measure the man in all his dimensions. In education he emerged as the prophet of local tax-supported public schools in the service of a civic ideal. Working scientists, as they grew curious about the beginnings of inquiry in their fields, encountered Jefferson everywhere. And so they hailed him as a pioneer botanist, geographer, ethnologist, paleontologist, and so on. In the arts he was acclaimed "the father of our national architecture." The acquisition of Monticello by a private foundation committed to its preservation in 1923 focused attention on Jefferson the architect and revealed this foremost American humanist in all his fascinating complexity.

Serious interest in a national memorial to Jefferson dates from the turn of the 20th century. It arose among Democrats who had always esteemed Jefferson the father of their party. When the Democrats returned to power in Washington in 1933 a fitting patriotic memorial to Jefferson became an important object. No one was more committed to this than President Franklin D. Roosevelt himself.

In 1934 Congress created the 12-member Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission. Chaired by New York Representative John J. Boylan, it wrestled with matters of site and design for months. There were many advocates of a utilitarian memorial, perhaps a planetarium, a stadium, a concert hall, or a museum. The fatal defect of all such ideas was that the use obscured the patriotic purpose.

These proposals were, in any event, barred by the earlier decision of the commission to raise the memorial on the secluded site of the Tidal Basin, long recognized as the "fifth point" that would close the grand composition around the Mall and the Washington Monument. The commission favored a



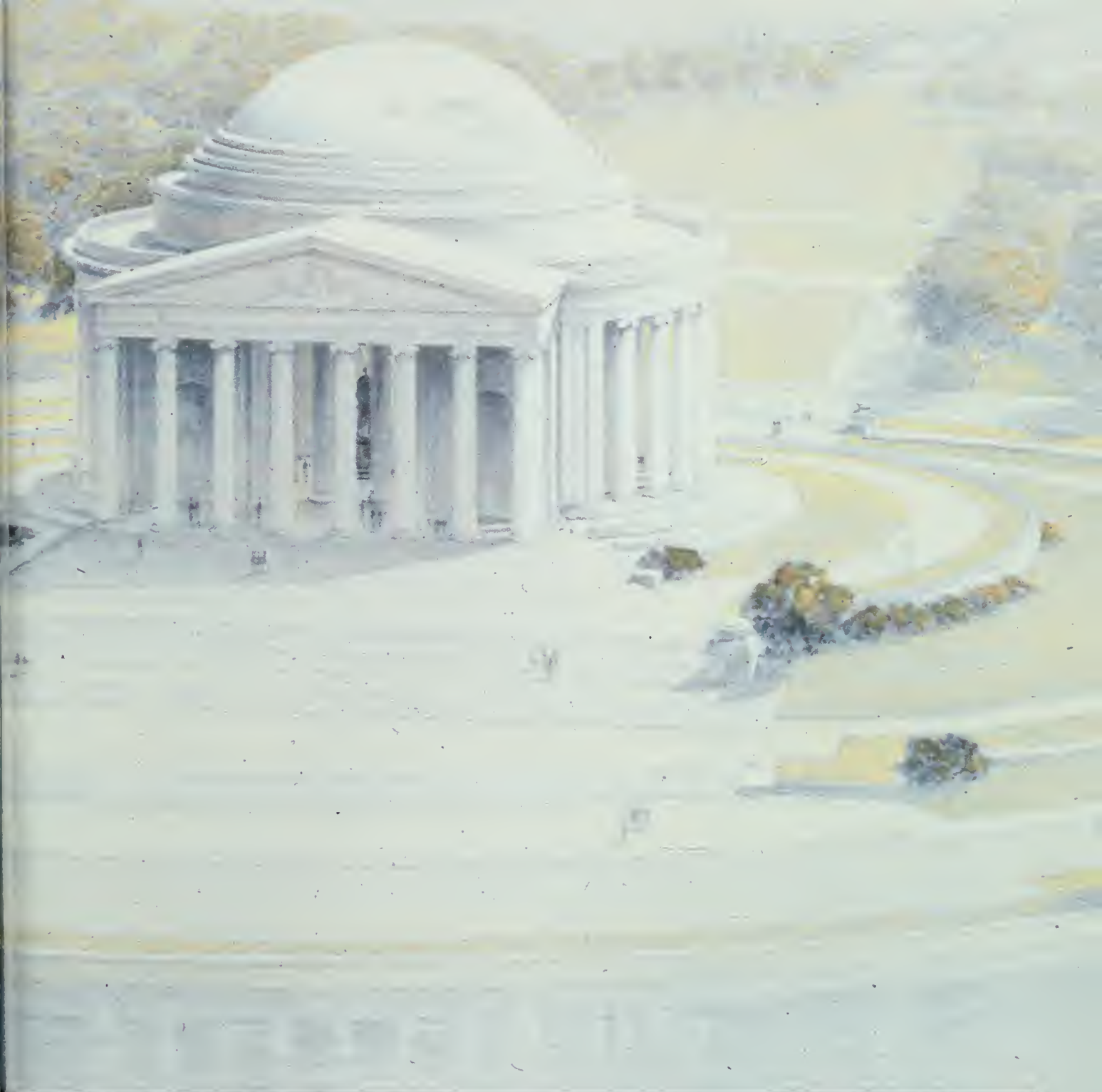
Controversial Site and Design

Like many monuments in the Nation's Capital, the Jefferson Memorial has had its share of debate and controversy. On June 26, 1943, when the Congress established the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission, the proposed site was a triangular block east of the National Archives. At the commission's first meeting, however, President Franklin D. Roosevelt labeled it too small. Four new sites were consid-



ered: on the Mall opposite the National Archives, in Lincoln Park, in Anacostia, and on an island in the Potomac's Tidal Basin south of the White

House. The commission selected, without competition, classicist John Russell Pope as architect. He had designed the National Archives and



Constitution Hall and was in the midst of working on plans for the National Gallery of Art. He developed a few alternative designs for the Jefferson Memorial, including one, left, for the Mall. The commission settled on a Tidal Basin site and approved Pope's design, based on Rome's Pantheon initially. Soon, however, they also approved the design based on his Theodore Roosevelt Memorial, which was

favored by the Commission of Fine Arts. After Pope died in 1937, his widow blocked any modifications to its use. Then, amid requests from architects and artists for an open design competition and amid questions about building such an apparently expensive memorial in a period of austerity, the commission returned to the Pantheon version, above, with refinements by associates Otto R. Eggers and Daniel P.

Higgins. The commission sent its decision to Congress on March 30, 1938. Approval by Congress and appropriation of funds allowed site preparation to begin. Opponents asked Roosevelt to halt construction to save the cherry trees at the memorial site. Some chained themselves to trees or filled up holes where trees were to be transplanted. Roosevelt remained firm, and construction proceeded.

Construction and Dedication

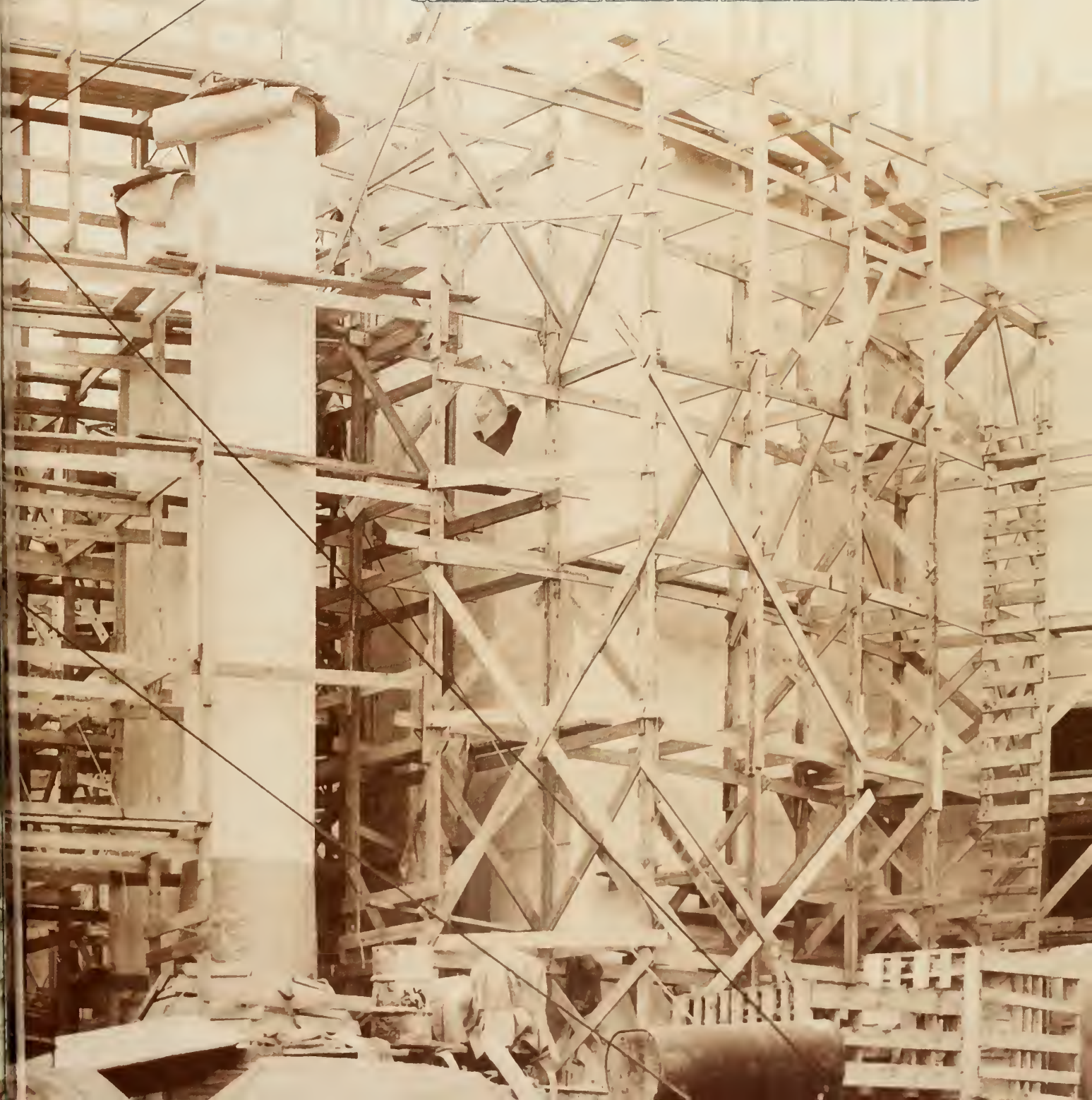
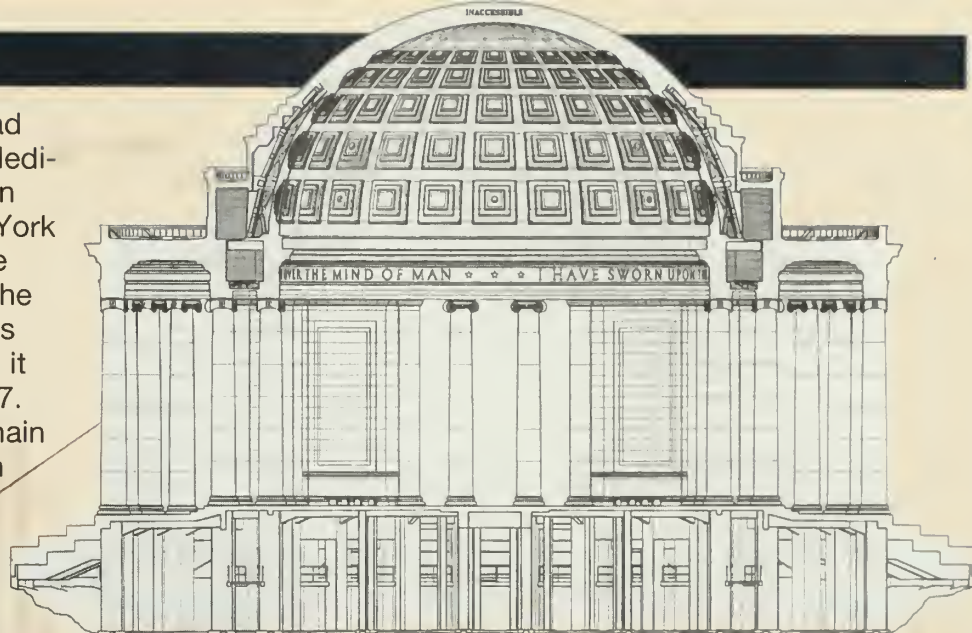
President Franklin D. Roosevelt was keenly interested in Thomas Jefferson and the memorial to him. Roosevelt presided at the groundbreaking ceremony December 15, 1938; he laid the cornerstone November 15, 1939; and, right, he spoke at the April 13, 1943, dedication. Most of 1939 was devoted to building the substructure and a broad circular base of granite steps and terraces leading up to the main floor. Once the cor-



nerstone was laid, construction of the sides and rotunda began and continued for more than two years. The search for a sculptor had begun March 2, 1939. A field of 101 applicants was honed to six men, who then went through a laborious process of submitting models before Rudolph Evans was selected in October 1941. During World War II metal was scarce; casting of the 19-foot bronze statue did not take place until



1946. (A plaster version had been installed during the dedication in 1943.) The Roman Bronze Company of New York completed the 21 separate castings in nine months. The $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch thick statue weighs more than 10,000 pounds; it was installed April 25, 1947. The bas-relief above the main entrance depicts Jefferson reading the Declaration of Independence.



WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS TO BE SELF-EVIDENT: THAT ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL, THAT THEY ARE ENDOWED BY THEIR CREATOR WITH CERTAIN INALIENABLE RIGHTS, AMONG THESE ARE LIFE, LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS, THAT TO SECURE THESE RIGHTS GOVERNMENTS ARE INSTITUTED AMONG MEN. WE... SOLEMNLY PUBLISH AND DECLARE, THAT THESE COLONIES ARE AND OF RIGHT OUGHT TO BE FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES...AND FOR THE SUPPORT OF THIS DECLARATION, WITH A FIRM RELIANCE ON THE PROTECTION OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE, WE MUTUALLY PLEDGE OUR LIVES, OUR FORTUNES AND OUR

classical design and retained John Russell Pope, the foremost interpreter of American classical architecture, to supply it. His circular plan, based upon the Roman Pantheon, a form dear to Jefferson himself, met with the commission's approval in 1937.

A storm of protest greeted the announcement. Groups of artists railed against this "pompous pile," this "senile sham," this "cold mausoleum imitation of imperial Rome," which in their opinion had nothing to do with the spirit of Jefferson. In a sense, the issue mirrored the conflict between those who clung to the historical Jefferson and those who appealed to his progressive vision, though what form the latter might take in a monument, apart from a highway or auditorium, was unclear. Both President and Congress approved the commission's plan and voted the first installment on a \$3 million dollar appropriation.

The final skirmish in the battle over the memorial, "the cherry tree rebellion," occurred when bulldozers invaded the site to break ground in November 1938. Some 700 cherry trees, it was charged, would be sacrificed to Jefferson's monument. Roosevelt denounced this last-ditch resistance as "the worst case of flimflamming this dear old capital...has been subjected to for a long time." Actually, few trees would be sacrificed. Jefferson's legacy was irreplaceable; more trees could be planted.

Building of the memorial went forward despite the war, or perhaps because of it, for the memorial itself was a visible manifestation of the American faith in freedom. The commission chose the group sculpture for the pediment and the 19-foot tall figure of a standing Jefferson in a great coat by Rudolph Evans for the center of the memorial. It went on to select texts from Jefferson's writings to be mounted in four panels on the interior walls. These were taken from the Declaration of Independence, the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, and other sources. Spelled out on the frieze encircling the dome were the noble words of Jefferson's personal oath: "I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man."

Excerpts from Jefferson's writings are engraved on the four interior walls of the memorial. The selections from the Declaration of Independence (left) are on the southwest wall. The other three engravings are taken from the Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom and from a letter to James Madison; from Jefferson's Notes on the State of Virginia and from a letter to George Washington on public education and slavery; and from a letter to Samuel Kercheval on the need for institutional change.

Part 2



Sage of Monticello





The Curious Virginian



Jefferson gave this portrait, painted in Paris by John Trumbull in 1788, to Maria Cosway as a memento of their friendship that developed after the artist introduced the widower to the Englishwoman. The painting was given to the White House in 1976. George Wythe, Jefferson's mentor and law professor at William and Mary College, lived in this house, left, in Williamsburg. Wythe was a signer of his former pupil's Declaration of Independence.

Preceding pages: Monticello, constructed almost continuously between 1769 and 1809, reflects Jefferson's neoclassical architectural tastes.

Thomas Jefferson was born at Shadwell, in Virginia, on April 13, 1743. His mother, Jane Randolph, was the daughter of a leading family. His father, Peter Jefferson, a self-taught surveyor and mapmaker, had been among the earliest settlers of this wilderness country called Albemarle; when he died in 1757, he was a leading citizen. He left his elder son a fair estate—5,000 acres of land and the slaves to work them—and a zeal for education. According to family tradition, young Thomas had read all the books in his father's library before he was five years of age.

Schools were few and far between in rural Virginia. Thomas learned reading, writing, and arithmetic, followed by Greek and Latin, with a smattering of history, from Anglican parsons who doubled as schoolmasters.

At the age of 17 the raw country lad, tall and lanky, with reddish hair, left his beloved mountains and went to the lowcountry capital, Williamsburg, to attend the College of William and Mary. Here he came under the influence of Dr. William Small, the only non-clergyman on the faculty of the college. From him, Jefferson later wrote, "I got my first views of the expansion of science, and the system of things in which we are placed."

Ever "a hard student," ardent in the pursuit of knowledge, Jefferson believed nature had destined him for the sciences; but no careers opened to science in colonial Virginia, so he took the well-traveled path of the law. Here his mentor was the learned lawyer George Wythe, who became a lifelong friend. The circle of influence was closed by Francis Fauquier, the urbane royal governor. He invited the youth and his violin to the palace and introduced him to the life of cultivated taste and manners.

This trio of philosophers—Small, Wythe, and Fauquier—formed the best school Jefferson could have had, and some 60 years later he said that their spirited conversation mingled more wit and learning



Jefferson moved his family into the Governor's Palace after he succeeded Patrick Henry as the second governor of independent Virginia. Earlier, as a college student in Williamsburg, Jefferson had been entertained there by Royal Governor Francis Fauquier.

than he had heard in all the rest of his life besides.

Admitted to the bar in 1767, Jefferson entered upon a successful practice. Law led into politics. In 1769 he succeeded to the seat once held by his father in the House of Burgesses at Williamsburg. He became a leader in the burgeoning controversy with Great Britain; and in 1774, under the pressure of these events, he gave up his practice as a lawyer and never resumed it.

In the same year he embarked upon his political career, Jefferson also began to build Monticello, the lovely home on a densely wooded summit not far from his birthplace. There were no architects in Virginia, so Jefferson became his own architect; and the versatility he showed in this endeavor marked a permanent trait. Learning architecture from books, he discovered his master in the Renaissance Italian Andrea Palladio, who had gone to Roman antiquity for his models. The lesson of Palladio was that the laws of architecture were as universal, chaste, and harmonious as Newtonian laws of nature. Monticello was a modified Palladian villa, and all Jefferson's later architectural masterpieces—the Virginia Capitol, Poplar Forest, the University of Virginia—were in the Palladian manner.

Early in 1772, before the mansion was habitable, Jefferson brought his bride, Martha Wayles Skelton, an attractive young widow from the lowcountry, to Monticello. Their first child was born that year; five more followed during the next nine years. After the last child was born, Martha fell ill and died, leaving Jefferson bereft. He never remarried. Only two daughters lived to maturity. For a man who prized domestic delights above every other, he received but a small portion of them. The inheritance from Martha's father in 1774 more than doubled Jefferson's estate. Unfortunately, the property came burdened with debts to British merchants. Jefferson labored all his life to get clear of the debts, alas without success.

Jefferson rose to fame as "the penman" of the American Revolution. In 1774, in response to Parliament's Coercive Acts, he wrote a 6,500-word pamphlet, *A Summary View of the Rights of British America*. Basically a wholesale repudiation of Parliament's authority over the colonies, Jefferson's pamphlet left allegiance to a common king as the only

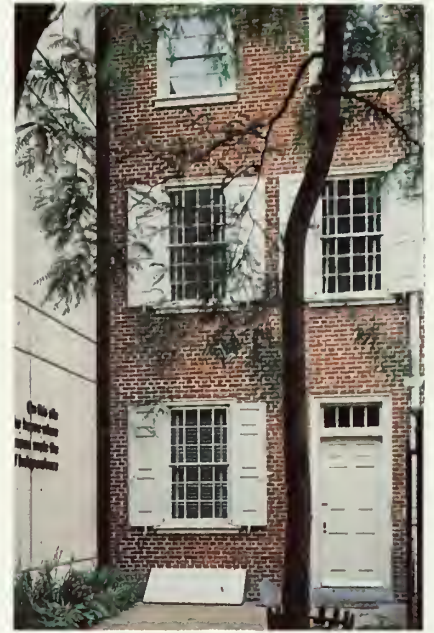
legal bond with the mother country for the colonists.

The following year, after the fighting commenced, Jefferson attended the Second Continental Congress, in Philadelphia. He brought with him, John Adams said, “A reputation for literature, science, and a happy talent for composition.” The latter was promptly employed by Congress in the writing of revolutionary state papers.

On June 11, 1776, this young gentleman of 33 who, as an early biographer wrote, “could calculate an eclipse, survey an estate, tie an artery, plan an edifice, try a cause, break a horse, dance a minuet, and play the violin,” found himself at the head of a five-man committee to prepare the American Declaration of Independence. Jefferson’s final draft went to Congress on July 2. During two and one-half days of debate, several changes were made, mostly stylistic but some of substance, for instance the elimination of the author’s indictment of George III for imposing African slavery—“cruel war against human nature itself”—on the colonies. But as enacted by Congress on July 4 the Declaration of Independence bore the stamp of the author’s genius. Its language was bold yet elevated, befitting an appeal to the reason and justice of mankind. The Declaration’s argument, although founded in English law, suppressed the particularism of that tradition to the universal vision of the Enlightenment.

In the celebrated preamble Jefferson condensed a philosophy of human rights and self-government in words that inspired action and in due time would become a national creed. The truths there declared to be “self-evident” were not new; indeed, as Jefferson later said, his purpose was “not to find new principles, or new arguments..., but to place before mankind the common sense of the subject.” Human equality, the natural rights of man, the sovereignty of the people, the right of revolution—these principles endowed the American Revolution with high moral purpose and heralded the democratic future not alone in America but in the world.

Jefferson soon returned to Virginia and entered the newly constituted House of Delegates with plans to reform the old order there. The state constitution that had been adopted during his absence was much too conservative to suit him, and while efforts to reform it failed, Jefferson worked to achieve reforms



In the summer of 1776 Jefferson drafted the Declaration of Independence in the second-floor bedroom and parlor he rented in a house built by bricklayer Jacob Graff at Seventh and Market streets in Philadelphia. Graff House, reconstructed in 1975, contains reproductions of Jefferson’s lap desk and swivel chair, plus exhibits and a film about the Declaration.

Author of the Declaration

Thomas Jefferson is known around the world for writing the Declaration of Independence. It all happened rather quickly. On June 11, 1776, the Second Continental Congress appointed Jefferson and four others to draft the document. When they met, Jefferson suggested that John Adams write it. Adams declined, saying he was too obnoxious and unpopular and that Jefferson "can write

ten times better than I can." Jefferson wrote the draft in the rooms he had rented from Jacob Graff; Adams and Benjamin Franklin made a few minor changes. On the portable writing table, right, that Jefferson had designed, he refined the text and made several additions. That copy, now lost, was submitted on June 28 to John Hancock, president of the Congress, by, as shown from the left in

John Trumbull's painting, Adams, Robert Livingston, Roger Sherman, Jefferson, and Franklin. In eloquent, philosophical terms about human liberty, Jefferson expressed the colonies' grievances against King George III, concluding with their right to separate from Great Britain. Congress then debated the document for two and one-half days and made some changes, toned down



several ideas and made others more direct. Congress adopted the Declaration on the evening of July 4 and had it printed. It was read publicly four days later in the State House yard. Several years passed before Jefferson's authorship was known broadly. He said later he was not trying to find new principles "but to place before mankind...an expression of the American mind."





Jefferson designed the bindings of these Library of Congress books. In 1815 he sold his collection of about 6,500 volumes to Congress for \$23,950 after British troops had burned the Capitol. About two-thirds of those books were lost in an 1851 fire at the library.

by ordinary legislation. In this he met with partial success. Abolition of laws of entail and primogeniture—vestiges of feudalism—worked toward wider distribution of landed property among the people.

Jefferson's remarkable Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, enacted after a decade-long campaign in 1786, not only completed disestablishment of the Anglican Church but became a powerful directive toward securing the twin principles of freedom of religious conscience and a separation between church and state in American law. Its bold assertion that individual opinions are beyond the reach of civil authority has made it one of the great charters of the free mind as well.

Unfortunately the Virginia oligarchs defeated other major reforms of Jefferson's "truly republican" system. His education bill, for instance, offered a complete plan of public education from elementary schools through a university, with a state library and museum as well. Jefferson's "quixotism" on the subject of education stemmed from his political principles, for he considered an educated citizenry essential to maintaining republican government. He was devastated when the legislature defeated his education bill, which he called "the most important in our whole code."

Slavery was another obstacle to the hopes of republicanism. Although himself a slaveholder, he thought the institution evil and unjust and drafted a plan of gradual emancipation to end it. It was held back on the plea of expediency, however. Believing emancipation a political impossibility, Jefferson was unwilling to martyr himself uselessly and instead looked to the younger generation to turn the fate of this question.

In 1779 Jefferson was elected governor of Virginia to succeed Patrick Henry. It was a perilous time. The British army had decided to "unravel the thread of rebellion from the southward." Virginia became a battleground as the traitor-general Benedict Arnold invaded from the sea and Charles, Lord Cornwallis stormed in from the south. The government was driven from Richmond in May 1781, and Jefferson, with his term as governor expiring, was chased from Monticello. Throughout the ordeal Jefferson acquitted himself well; nevertheless, he did not escape the sting of censure, and such was his disappointment that he

resolved to quit the public stage forever.

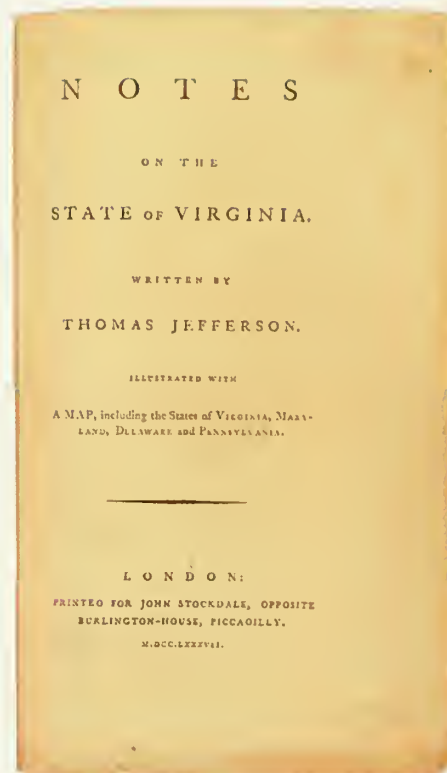
Tragedy struck in September 1782 when his wife died, plunging Jefferson into the darkest gloom of his life. Yet it was Martha's death that finally led him back into the path of leadership. The idyll he had imagined for himself at Monticello suddenly passed out of reach. "Before that event my scheme of life had been determined," Jefferson wrote to a friend. "I had folded myself in the arms of retirement, and rested all prospects of future happiness on domestic and literary objects. A single event wiped away all my plans and left me a blank which I had not the spirit to fill up." Fortunately, Congress threw him a lifeline, and he returned to service in December.

Among Jefferson's immediate "literary objects" was the work that became, upon its publication in 1785, his first and only book, *Notes on the State of Virginia*. Actually it was not begun as a book but as a straightforward response to a series of matter-of-fact questions posed by the revolutionary ally, France, for information on the new nation. Jefferson converted the task into a personal intellectual discovery of his native country, the Virginia of that day extending to the Great Lakes and the Mississippi and even perhaps beyond, so imprecise were colonial charters.

A melange of facts and opinions on many subjects, from rivers and mountains to mammoths, laws, and American Indians, *Notes on Virginia* is uniquely interesting as a guide to Jefferson's mind. It exhibits his insatiable curiosity, manifold interests, painstaking detail, and speculative bent. It discloses the man of science, disciplined to empirical fact, yet also the man of almost romantic sensibility, enraptured by the American landscape.

The book is a virtual manual of Jefferson's political opinions, and some of its passages—on the evils of slavery, on the virtues of husbandry, on the errors of the Virginia constitution—would later be said to have been "stereotyped in the public voice." The book appealed to the little community of American philosophers and ensured for Jefferson a scientific and literary reputation on both sides of the Atlantic.

In the Confederation Congress for a brief time in 1783-84, Jefferson laid the foundations of national policy in two critical areas. First, he proposed a decimal system of coinage on the dollar unit. The idea was adopted—a national mint would follow—and



Jefferson's Notes on the State of Virginia contains information on geography, natural history, religion, customs, the arts, and other subjects. It was published first in a private edition in Paris, then translated into French in 1785. Two years later Jefferson arranged for an English edition published in London.



the system replaced the prevailing chaos in the nation's coinage.

Second, his Ordinance of 1784 established the plan whereby new self-governing states would rise in the national domain beyond the Appalachians and each in turn would be admitted to the Union on an equality with the original states. The law evolved into the celebrated Northwest Ordinance of 1787.

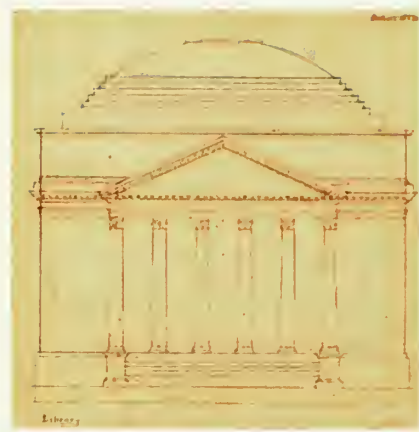
Jefferson's mathematical mind also left its imprint on the rectilinear land survey system adopted for the national domain. Always he showed remarkable vision for the West. He spoke of the United States as an "empire of liberty," and he would live to see the American flag flying from the tip of Florida to the headwaters of the Missouri River.

In May 1784 Congress appointed Jefferson to a commission to negotiate treaties of peace and commerce with European states. Although he has been often portrayed as a narrow agrarian in his economic outlook, Jefferson was, in fact, an ardent commercial expansionist. As an agricultural country the United States sought to dispose of its surpluses abroad and import what it needed in the way of manufactures and other goods. Moreover, only by opening new markets to American ships and products could the new nation achieve economic independence from Great Britain. The commission met with indifferent success, but Jefferson continued his efforts on behalf of American commerce when he succeeded Benjamin Franklin as U.S. minister to France in the spring of 1785.

The five years spent in France were among the happiest of his life. Paris was the capital of the Enlightenment, that great movement that combined scientific rationalism with ideas of freedom, beauty, and the progress of mankind; and Jefferson was a child of the Enlightenment. His heroes were neither kings nor warriors but philosophers—above all Bacon, Newton, and Locke, upon whose work the edifice of the Enlightenment was raised.

In Paris Jefferson feasted upon the infinitely varied pleasures of the mind and spirit. He haunted the bookstores, frequented the fashionable salons, and indulged his appetite for art and music and theater. He traveled in England, in the south of France, in Holland, and in the Rhineland.

He was "violently smitten" by the glories of archi-



Jefferson used graph paper for his careful ink drawing of the library for the University of Virginia. The Rotunda, as it is now called, is based on the Pantheon and is the centerpiece of his architectural plan for the school. He also designed Virginia's Capitol, left, in Richmond, and based it on the Maison Carrée in Nîmes, France.

itecture, among them the Maison Carrée, the Roman ruin, which he saw at Nîmes and which he made the model of a new capitol for Virginia, thereby inaugurating the Roman style in the architecture of the young republic. He interpreted the new world to the old and presided over the two-way intercourse in the arts and sciences.

As much as he enjoyed the beauties and refinements of France, Jefferson was appalled by the ignorance, poverty, and oppression of the mass of people. "My God!" he exclaimed. "How little do my countrymen know what precious blessings they are in possession of, and which no other people on earth enjoy. I confess I had no idea of it myself." In sum, like many of the countrymen to follow in his footsteps, he came into full possession of his Americanism on the shores of Europe.

Jefferson was a keen observer of the opening scenes of the French Revolution in 1789, and he became its steadfast friend even as he entertained doubts about its course. In his opinion the French people were unprepared for democratic revolution on the American plan. He cautioned his liberal friends in Paris, chief among them Lafayette, the premier "Americanist," from pushing things too far too fast; yet he rejoiced at every advance—the ascendancy of the national assembly, the abolition of feudalism, and the adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen—and he believed the United States, indeed all the world, had a vital stake in the revolution's success. "Here," he wrote, "is but the first chapter of the history of European liberty."

When Jefferson returned home on leave in November 1789, the new government under the Constitution was just getting underway, and President Washington asked him to accept the post of secretary of state. Jefferson had had no part in framing the Constitution. Pondering the document in Paris, where tyranny, not anarchy, was the problem, he thought the framers had been too much influenced by fears of democracy, which had been inflamed by events like Shays' Rebellion in Massachusetts. (Jefferson's philosophical response to that was the declaration "that a little rebellion now and then is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical.") Yet he approved of most of the Constitution. His principal objection was to the

omission of a bill of rights. This problem was removed in the First Congress when, mainly through the efforts of his great friend James Madison, the first ten amendments were adopted and sent to the states for ratification.

The tall, reserved, and polished Virginian assumed his duties as the new government's first secretary of state in New York, the temporary capital, on the first day of spring 1790. He brought to the post impressive qualifications. In it he continued to work for the expansion of American commerce. He sought to redeem the West from European imperialism with the Spanish on the southern border and the British to the north, both with Indian allies; and he aimed to exploit any European crisis to the advantage of American independence, wealth, and power. Such a crisis materialized in 1793 when Britain and France went to war and both competed for the favors of America's neutral trade.

The conduct of American neutrality, specifically whether it should squint toward Britain or France, the revolutionary ally, immediately became a hot political issue. During the past two years the new government had been increasingly divided by the conflict between two emerging political parties, the reigning Federalists and the opposition Republicans.

This conflict, in turn, was personalized by the cabinet quarrel between Alexander Hamilton, secretary of the treasury, and Jefferson. Their antagonism—the archetypal conflict of American politics—originated over Hamilton's measures to fund the huge public debt, establish a national bank, and subsidize infant manufactures, all tending to benefit privileged moneyed interests and break down the restraints of the Constitution in Jefferson's opinion.

The conflict invaded the field of foreign affairs, for Hamilton, in Jefferson's opinion, was an Anglophile bent on coercing the government into the English form, while the New Yorker thought the Virginian a Francophile and a wild Jacobin to boot. The controversy over neutrality inflamed political passions as never before. Jefferson negotiated the crisis as best he could and, with little stomach for the political combat it entailed, retired as secretary of state at the end of the year.

Return to the highlands of his native Albemarle—"the Eden of the United States"—was a return to the

Jefferson's Compatriots

An extraordinary group of British colonists envisioned a new nation, rallied and led their fellow revolutionaries in a long war, and saw the United States through its rough formative years. Though they did not agree with each other at all times, they steadfastly pursued a common goal of personal freedom and democratic government. Thomas Jefferson influenced and was influenced by all the men pictured below. Thomas Paine's

pamphlets, *Common Sense* and *The Crisis*, inspired the patriots during the Revolutionary War. His earthy language had a more immediate effect on the common people than Jefferson's carefully crafted, elegant prose in the Declaration of Independence. John Adams and Benjamin Franklin served with Jefferson on the committee drafting the Declaration, and during and after the war all three served as diplomats in Europe. Jef-

erson succeeded Franklin as U.S. minister to France and was there when the U.S. Constitution was debated and written in Philadelphia, with great influence from his fellow Virginian James Madison and Franklin. Jefferson returned from Paris and served as secretary of state under the first U.S. President, George Washington, who had been commander of the Continental Army during the Revolution. Jefferson resigned four years



*Alexander
Hamilton
1755-1804*

*James
Monroe
1758-1831*

*Aaron
Burr
1756-1836*

John Adams 1735-1826

*Benjamin
Franklin
1706-1790*

later when Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton's ideas about strong central government came into conflict with his own. Adams, a supporter of Hamilton, became the second President with three more electoral votes than Jefferson, who became vice president. Four years later, Jefferson defeated Adams but tied with Aaron Burr in electoral votes. After 36 ballots in the House of Representatives, Jefferson was elected President, and

Burr served as vice president. Madison became secretary of state. Jefferson won a second term without Burr on the ticket. Burr ran unsuccessfully for governor of New York, killed Hamilton in a duel, and later, on Jefferson's orders, was arrested for allegedly promoting rebellion. Burr was tried for treason in Richmond, Virginia, but the charges were not proved. Chief Justice John Marshall, an adversary of Jefferson, presided at the

trial. Madison, who with James Monroe helped conclude the Louisiana Purchase, became the fourth President. Monroe, who had studied law under Jefferson, was Madison's secretary of state. Monroe succeeded Madison and was unopposed for a second term. With Madison and Monroe in the White House a total of 16 years, Jefferson saw his legacy continue until 1825.



*Thomas
Jefferson
1743-1826*

*John Marshall
1755-1835*

*George
Washington
1732-1799*

*James Madison
1751-1836*

Thomas Paine 1737-1809

Monticello's entrance hall exhibits several of Jefferson's many interests. On the wall hang some maps of Virginia, including one by his father, Peter, produced with Joshua Fry; elk antlers, collected by Lewis and Clark; other natural history specimens and prehistoric artifacts. Busts of Voltaire, the philosopher, and Turgot, the French financier, flank the doorway. A bust of Jefferson faces his arch rival, Alexander Hamilton, across the hallway.

paradise of Jefferson's soul. "My farm, my family and my books call me to them irresistibly." Nor did he expect to be called from them again. In 1796 a touring Frenchman, the Duc de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, found this American Cato in the midst of his fall harvest:

"In private life Mr. Jefferson displays a mild, easy, and obliging temper, though he is somewhat cold and reserved. His conversation is of the most agreeable kind, and he possesses a stock of information not inferior to that of any other man. In Europe he would hold a distinguished rank among men of letters, and as such he has already appeared there; at present he is employed with activity and perseverance in the management of his farms and buildings; and he orders, directs, and pursues in the minutest detail every branch of the business relating to them."

But in practical farming Jefferson showed more science than skill. The payoff was marginal. Moreover, he could not curb his lavish tastes. At no small expense for the next 15 years, he rebuilt Monticello on an enlarged plan, the better to accommodate his family and the better to express his personal architectural ideal.

As before, the pastoral tranquility he had imagined for himself at Monticello eluded Jefferson, and in 1796 he yielded to pressures drawing him back into politics. In the presidential election, the Republicans made the Virginian their candidate against John Adams, the vice president under George Washington. Adams, his old friend from Massachusetts, prevailed, and Jefferson succeeded him in the second office of the land, the post he actually preferred at this perilous time.

Caught up in the currents of the European war, the Adams administration would be sunk by it. In 1798 the Federalists blew up a storm over disloyalty and sedition at home in the hope of discrediting or destroying the rival Republican party and thus perpetuating themselves in power. The Alien and Sedition Acts, which authorized summary deportation of dangerous aliens and punished allegedly "false, scandalous, and malicious writings against the government," were the main vehicles of this strategy. Jefferson led the opposition against the laws despite the vulnerability of his position. In 1798 he secretly drafted the Kentucky Resolutions—Madison drafted





Father of Westward Expansion

With the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson envisioned the United States on paper. With the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, he extended that vision on the ground. He exhibited such subtle and patient diplomatic skills with the French and Spanish governments over a two-year period that the United States was able to double its size westward without firing a shot. These uncharted lands

between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains cost the United States \$15 million, or less than four cents an acre. Jefferson feared that such a purchase was unconstitutional and believed that a constitutional amendment would be necessary to validate the acquisition. No one else had such concerns, and the treaty met few objections in the Senate. Meanwhile, Jefferson had been planning





an expedition to explore the new lands west of the Mississippi River. He chose Meriwether Lewis, his private secretary and fellow Albemarle resident, to lead it. William Clark, a Kentucky resident, was second in command. Together they led the 43-man Corps of Discovery on an epic journey up the Missouri River in the summer of 1804. They wintered near present-day Bismarck, North Dakota. Then

they headed over the Rockies to the Columbia River arriving at the Pacific, December 3, 1805, where they built Fort Clatsop. On the trip to the Pacific and on their return to St. Louis in 1806, they collected animals, plants, soils and American Indian objects. They gave peace and friendship medals, left, to tribal leaders; and noted all sorts of data in journals and on maps, such as Clark's map above. Ameri-

can Indian delegations visited Washington and other cities. Though he had traveled to France and England, Jefferson never saw the lands west of the Mississippi. Today, Jefferson National Expansion Memorial in Missouri, Mount Rushmore National Memorial in South Dakota, and Fort Clatsop National Memorial in Oregon celebrate Jefferson's westward vision.

similar resolutions for Virginia—that invoked the rights of the states to declare the oppressive laws unconstitutional.

The conflict came to a head, and found its resolution, in the presidential election of 1800. It was bitterly fought. The Federalists assailed Jefferson as a Jacobin incendiary, an infidel, a demagogue, and an enemy of George Washington and the Constitution. Jefferson was victorious but by a quirk of the Constitution, he was not finally elected until February 17, 1801, and not by the people but by the House of Representatives. An electoral vote tie between Jefferson and his running mate, Aaron Burr, threw the choice to that body where the lame duck Federalists, defiant to the end, supported Burr. Only after 36 ballots was Jefferson elected.

In retrospect Jefferson called the Republican ascendancy “the revolution of 1800,” for it proved that the peaceable processes of open debate and free election were sufficient means of reform. The Constitution became an instrument of democracy, change became possible without destruction, and government could go forward with the ongoing consent of the governed.

In his inaugural address—a political touchstone for generations to come—Jefferson appealed for the restoration of harmony and affection. “We have called by different names brethren of the same principle. We are all republicans—we are all federalists.”

Conciliation did not exclude reform, however. Jefferson offered a brilliant summation of the republican creed. Freedom of speech and press, “equal and exact justice to all men,” “absolute acquiescence in the decisions of the majority,” “the preservation of the general government in its whole constitutional vigor” together with respect for the rights of states, “encouragement of agriculture, and of commerce as its handmaid,” “peace, commerce, and honest friendship, with all nations, entangling alliances with none”—such were the principles of his political faith.

In domestic affairs Jefferson’s administration was marked by abolition of internal taxes, by scheduled retirement of the debt over a period of 15 years, by reform of the federal judiciary, and by democratic openness and simplicity in the conduct of government. There were never any doubts who was in charge. To the authority of his office Jefferson added

his eminence as a philosopher-statesman and his influence as a party leader.

Throughout his years in the White House Jefferson was also president of the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia, the premier learned society. National political and scientific leadership were united in one person.

With his capacity for detail, Jefferson proved himself a good administrator. Through the network of party he also excelled as a leader of Congress, and all important legislation during the eight years of his presidency originated in the executive branch. By some personal magnetism Jefferson drew men to him, persuaded them to follow, and inspired their loyalty. The harmony and stability of his cabinet, composed of moderate Republicans like Madison and Albert Gallatin, has never been equalled.

Washington was a very small place in 1800, and Jefferson turned the White House into a kind of club, entertaining congressmen, cabinet officers, diplomats, and visitors several nights a week at dinner. The food, a combination of French and Virginia cookery, was abundant and good, while the wines gave the dinners a tasteful finish. Most of all, though, dinner at the President's table was "an elegant mental treat." As John Quincy Adams, a Massachusetts congressman, remarked, "You can never be an hour in that man's company without something of the marvelous."

Of course, churlish Federalists accused the President of using his hospitality to exert "backstairs" influence over Congress. No polls charted the President's popularity. The evidence suggests it was consistently high. Nevertheless, he continued to be vilified throughout these years. The most persistent slander, which originated with a disappointed office seeker, said the President kept a slave brothel at Monticello and fathered several children by an African mistress.

The President's greatest triumph, and greatest defeat, came in foreign affairs. In 1801 peace was in the offing in Europe, and Jefferson dared hope that the United States, "a chosen country," as he said in his inaugural address, "with room enough for our descendants to the thousandth and thousandth generation," might pursue its destiny in peace.

Almost at once, however, that vision was clouded



In 1778 Thomas Jefferson purchased this telescopic theodolite, a sophisticated surveying instrument for that era. When he succeeded his father as county surveyor he had assistants carry out his duties, but he continued to survey his own lands and used the theodolite for other purposes, such as calculating the elevation of Peaks of Otter in the Blue Ridge.

by news of Spain's retrocession of Louisiana with the great port of New Orleans to France under the rule of Napoleon. For two years Jefferson and Secretary of State Madison skillfully negotiated the crisis. It was finally resolved by the Louisiana Purchase on April 2, 1803. A magnificent bargain, the treaty added 820,000 square miles to the Union, reaching westward to the Rocky Mountains and beyond, virtually doubling the nation's size, for a price of under \$15 million dollars. It undergirded Jefferson's dream of "a chosen country" gradually filled with free and virtuous independent farmers.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition, 1804-1806, was an astounding reconnaissance of the distant domain, one that envisioned American expansion all the way to the Pacific. This "voyage of discovery," comparable in our day to going to the moon, proved a huge success. Jefferson's satisfaction in the Louisiana Purchase, however, was somewhat dimmed by his realization that it overstepped the limits of the Constitution. He drafted a retroactive amendment to authorize it, but it found no support in Congress, and Jefferson buried his fears of making the Constitution "a blank paper by construction."

Jefferson easily won reelection in 1804, but his second term proved to be an ordeal. The Federalists, although a shrinking remnant, relentlessly assailed Jefferson's character and politics. His method of working with Congress broke down, especially after he renounced a third term. The Burr Conspiracy in the southwest angered the President, and he threatened to turn the ensuing trial for treason into a vendetta against Burr as well as the presiding judge, John Marshall.

But the severest challenge arose on the Atlantic frontier with Europe. With the formation of the Third Coalition against Napoleonic France in 1805, all Europe was ablaze and the United States became the last neutral of consequence. The profits of the neutral trade fueled American prosperity. Each side demanded that trade be conducted on its own terms and neither feared war with the nation whose President prided himself on peace—"peace is my passion"—and had neither army nor navy to speak of.

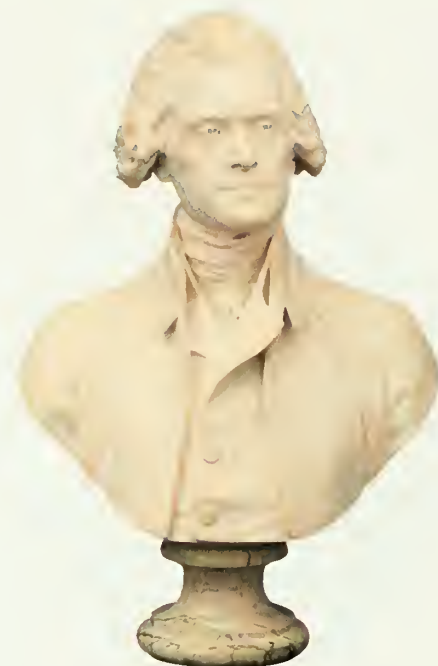
Britain was the chief aggressor in Jefferson's eyes. By impressing thousands of American sailors on the thin grounds that they may have been born British

subjects, the former mother country struck at the integrity of American nationality. British ships infested American waters and plundered American carriers. The attack by HMS *Leopard* upon the frigate *Chesapeake* aroused the whole country against Britain. The President could have had war with the snap of his fingers, but he cooled the crisis and continued to negotiate the issues of free trade and impressment with the British.

Finally, with negotiations stalemated in December 1807, Jefferson recommended to Congress the embargo of American commerce and navigation from the oceans. Congress complied immediately. The embargo—more than an alternative to war—was an experiment to test the effectiveness of a favorite idea, “peaceable coercion,” for settlement of international disputes. Jefferson, together with Secretary of State Madison, had long believed that the United States possessed in its commerce “another umpire than arms” to secure justice from marauding European powers. The administration labored valiantly to enforce the embargo. In the end, however, the privations and discontents it produced at home were more compelling than those it produced abroad. The Embargo Act was repealed in the waning hours of Jefferson’s administration. The upshot of those events would be the second war with Great Britain during the administration of his successor, James Madison.

“Never did a prisoner, released from his chains, feel such relief as I shall on shaking off the shackles of power,” Jefferson wrote. “Nature intended me for the tranquil pursuits of science, by rendering them my supreme delight. But the enormities of the times in which I have lived, have forced me to take a part in resisting them, and to commit myself on the boisterous ocean of political passions.” And he thanked God for the satisfaction of carrying with him ample proofs of public approbation.

In retirement Jefferson became the venerable Sage of Monticello. His daughter Martha, the only surviving child, managed a household filled with adoring grandchildren. Visitors from far and near, the great with the ordinary, came to see the renowned statesman and philosopher whose life was identified with the prodigy of the New World and whose home was one of his grandest creations. They



When Jefferson was in Paris he purchased sculptures by Jean Antoine Houdon for Monticello and had several made of himself. The Houdon busts later were used as models for Jefferson’s image on the peace and friendship medals and the nickel coin.



Martha Jefferson's portrait was painted by Joseph Boze in 1789, the year before she married Thomas Mann Randolph, Jr. Martha, named for her mother, went to Paris with her father when she was only 12 years old. After Jefferson's presidency, she and her family lived with him at Monticello, where he pursued many of his interests in his study, right. There are no known portraits of Jefferson's wife or their other children.

described “the strange furniture on its walls”—heads of elk and buffalo, Indian curiosities from the Lewis and Clark Expedition, maps, numerous paintings, prints, and portrait busts, many of them brought from France. His own bust, with Hamilton's, stood on opposite sides of the entrance hall.

Jefferson was in excellent health during most of these years. He took special delight in his gardens, describing himself as “an old man, but a young gardener.” The sun never found him in bed, he liked to say. “Mornings are devoted to correspondence. From breakfast to dinner [mid-afternoon], I am in my shops, my garden, or on horseback among my farms; from dinner to dark, I give to society and recreation with my neighbors and friends; and from candlelight to early bed-time, I read.”

His correspondence was immense. The best part of it was with John Adams, the old friend, sometime foe, with whom he was reunited in friendship in 1812. After the British burned the Capitol in 1814, Jefferson sold his great library numbering in excess of 6,000 volumes to Congress, where it became the nucleus of the Library of Congress. Promptly, saying “I cannot live without books,” he began to assemble still another library.

Architecture remained a delight, of course. He built a graceful octagon house at his plantation Poplar Forest, 90 miles to the south, where he would go two or three times a year to escape the rigors of life at Monticello.

Jefferson turned to a number of items of unfinished business during these years. In 1816 he added his voice to the movement spearheaded by western Virginians to reform the state constitution of 1776. Trying everything against the democratic standard—suffrage, representation, popular voice and participation—he also advocated a constitution open to change, generation to generation, on the principle “that laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind.”

With regard to slavery, Jefferson continued to adhere to the plan of gradual emancipation set forth in *Notes on Virginia*. He had made this work a legacy to the younger generation; unfortunately the sons of the fathers showed no inclination to take it up, and he declined to place himself at the head of so arduous a cause. In the end, as the waters of debt

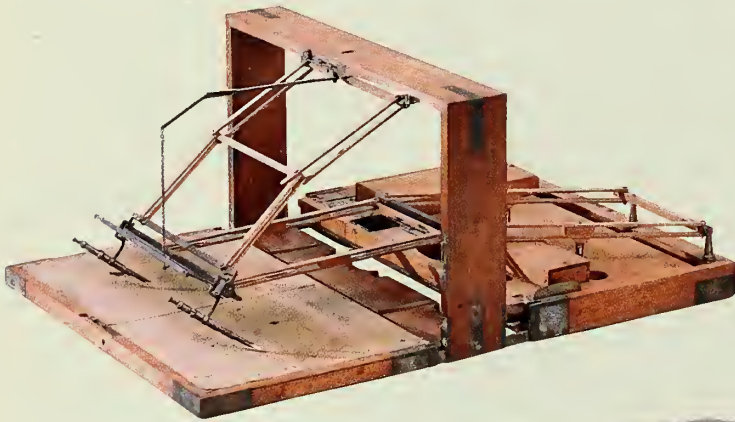


The Multifaceted Man

Thomas Jefferson had wide-ranging interests and pursued them with great energy. He was a devoted reader who applied what he learned not only to broad philosophical governmental decisions but also to daily farming activities at Monticello. He designed a plow moldboard that turned and pulverized soil efficiently; it could be easily made with a saw and an adze. Though the terminology may have differed

in his lifetime, Jefferson was interested in law and philosophy, politics and diplomacy, surveying and cartography, meteorology and astronomy,

architecture and the fine arts, languages and education, archeology and anthropology, paleontology and zoology, agriculture and horticulture—



Jefferson used a polygraph both in the White House and at Monticello.



even weights and measures. He collected American Indian artifacts, books, paintings, sculptures, engravings, and furnishings from both Europe and the United States. He played the violin and cello. He loved utilitarian gadgets. After he died, most of his possessions were sold to settle the debts on his estate, but many of them are now back at Monticello or in museums. Shown here are a few items

indicative of Jefferson's many interests and talents. The cup with Jefferson's initials is one of eight he had produced from two cups he inherited from his teacher and friend George Wythe. He had the revolving walnut bookstand made in the Monticello joinery. Jefferson designed the obelisk clock in 1790 to replace one that had been stolen from his home in Paris. He was fascinated with the obelisk and used that

design for his gravestone. Jefferson had a polygraph at both the White House and Monticello; as he wrote with one pen, the other pen produced a duplicate. Family legend says he used this telescope at Monticello to see British soldiers in Charlottesville in 1781 and to keep an eye on the construction of the University of Virginia in the years before his death.



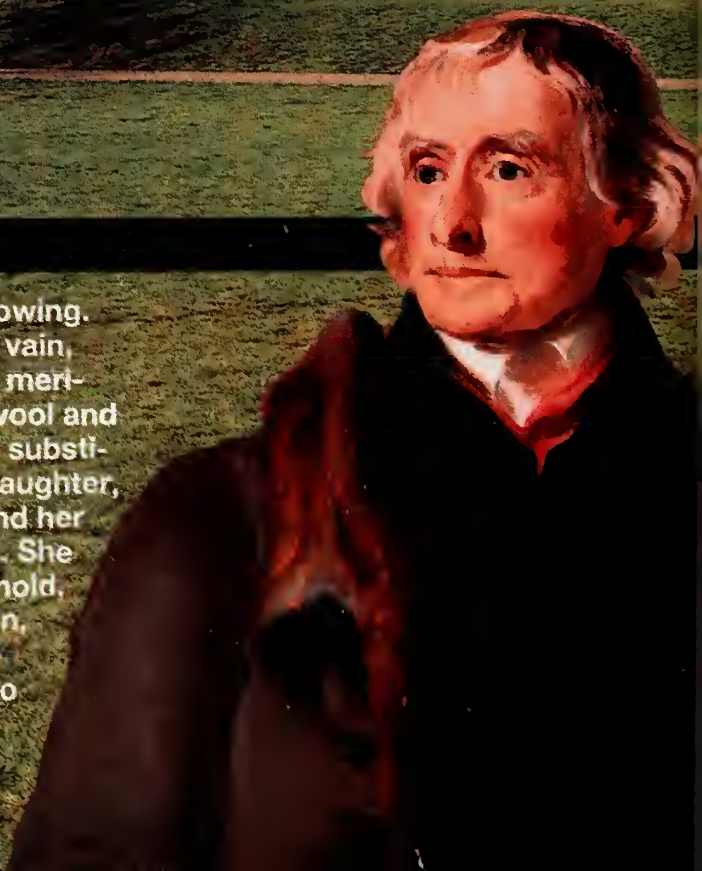
The rests of the book stand fold down to form a solid cube.



Years of Retirement


When Thomas Jefferson left the presidency, he returned to Monticello, his home on a hilltop overlooking Charlottesville, Virginia. For the next 17 years he led a full life tending his farms, replying to thousands of letters, enjoying his grandchildren, and developing the University of Virginia. He attempted to rejuvenate his wheat and tobacco farms by fertilizing the soils and reducing ero-

sion with contour plowing. He experimented, in vain, with raising Spanish merinos for their silken wool and with sesame oil as a substitute for butter. His daughter, Martha Randolph, and her family lived with him. She managed the household, tutored her 9 children, and entertained visitors who streamed to Monticello. Some of them stayed for





weeks, even months. Jefferson escaped a few times a year to his Poplar Forest retreat, shown at left. A failing economy, and growing expenses took their toll, and Jefferson, age 78 in the Thomas Sully portrait, fell into debt. Undeterred, he devoted his final years to designing and building his "academical village," above, the University of Virginia.



engulfed his estate, Jefferson freed but five of his own slaves, all competently skilled, by his will.

Some years before his death Jefferson completed a task begun in 1803 and which, when finally published a century later, became known as the Jefferson Bible. In his youth he had gone to the ancients for moral instruction; now, with the wisdom of age, he concluded that the teachings of Jesus made the best of all moral systems. Unfortunately, they had been corrupted, he believed, by "Platonizing priests and theologians." So Jefferson took a New Testament, cut from the four gospels those verses that bore the authentic stamp of Jesus, "as easily distinguished as diamonds in a dunghill," he observed, and arranged the resulting text in a book he called *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth* and had bound in red morocco for personal use. Disdaining public profession, he kept the work to himself, his family, and two or three friends. Whether or not it made him "a true Christian" by churchly standards Jefferson did not care; but he had brought the love of man taught by Jesus within the parameters of his core faith in reason and enlightenment.

The "holy cause" to which Jefferson dedicated himself in old age was public education. He revived his plan of general education, but without success. He then concentrated on the part nearest his heart and his head, the state university.

Chartered by the state in 1819, located nearby in Charlottesville, where he could oversee its rise, Jefferson could legitimately call himself its father. His architectural design of "an academical village" was strikingly original, well attuned to his purpose, and cleanly executed in brick and mortar and wood.

Jefferson recruited the faculty, framed the curriculum, acquired the library, and attended to every detail. The University of Virginia opened its doors to students 16 months before Jefferson's death. Liberal, secular, and modern in conception, beyond any American counterpart, it appeared the perfect case of Emerson's aphorism, "an institution is the lengthened shadow of one man."

Although he could take pride and satisfaction in the university, Jefferson's last years were etched with sadness. Not only were there the debts that would claim his estate and impoverish his descendants, but there were the public distresses caused by the uncer-

tain course of national politics. In 1820 the Missouri Compromise—"firebell in the night"—fanaticized politics on a sectional line dividing free and slave states. Jefferson feared the compromise would lead to disunion or something worse. Yet through it all the Sage of Monticello retained his serene faith in the progress and improvement of mankind. And so he wrote to John Adams, who liked to twit his friend on the exploded hopes of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution:

"I shall not die without a hope that light and liberty are on steady advance.... And even should the cloud of barbarism and despotism again obscure the science and liberties of Europe, this country remains to preserve and restore light and liberty to them. In short, the flames kindled on the 4th of July 1776 have spread over too much of the globe to be extinguished by the feeble engines of despotism. On the contrary they will consume those engines, and all who work them."

Jefferson died at Monticello on the 50th anniversary of American independence, July 4, 1826. A meticulous man to the end, he designed his tombstone and wrote his own epitaph. He chose to be remembered for but three "testimonials" of his life:

Author of the Declaration of Independence

Of the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom

And Father of the University of Virginia

One need not be puzzled by this select list, for each achievement represented an arc of the circle of his faith in human liberty, dignity, and enlightenment. John Adams also died on that day of jubilee. The course of American democracy would verify the truth of Adams's reputed last words, "Thomas Jefferson still survives."



In the later years of Jefferson's life, respect and admiration for him grew. Some images, such as this one, produced late in his life or perhaps even after his death depicted him in a classical manner that reflected either Jefferson's own interest in antiquity or the manner in which his contemporaries likened Jefferson to the giants of the classical world.

National Park Service

Credits

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U.S. Department of the Interior



The mission of the Department of the Interior is to protect and provide access to our Nation's natural and cultural heritage and honor our trust responsibilities to tribes. The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The National Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

Armchair Explorations

Here is a partial list of books pertaining to Thomas Jefferson that might interest you:

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Harry N. Abrams, Inc., and Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, Inc. 1993.

Jefferson Memorial

